11644. L.57.

David Scot Carmichael Smyth

THE

DYING NEGRO,

&c.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

DYING NEGRO,

A

POEM.

BY THE LATE

THOMAS DAY and JOHN BICKNELL, Esquires.

To which is added,

A

FRAGMENT OF A LETTER

ON THE

SLAVERY OF THE NEGROES.

By THOMAS DAY, Esq.

EMBELLISHED WITH A FRONTISPIECE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY.

1793.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

INTRODUCTION.

THE Editor thinks that the following Poem, which appeared at firſt ſo long ago as the year 1773, and has been much celebrated, will be extremely acceptable at this juncture in a new Edition, and, perhaps, the more ſo, from his informing the public, that it owed its exiſtence to the united pens of the late John Bicknell, Eſquire, and the author of Sandford and Merton. Theſe Gentlemen have merited a very diſtinguiſhed place among the friends of men, whoſe

ſufferings, when they determined to record them, the world ſcarcely noticed. Since the period has arrived for a more general diſcuſſion, their grievances have excited univerſal pity in Europe, and this moſt unfortunate part of the human race will have cauſe to beſtow everlaſting thanks and praiſes on Great Britain for her late humane and diſintereſted exertions.

Here Mr. Day ſeems to commence his career of Author. He wrote the whole of the dedication, and the greater part of the poetry,* both of which breathe his uſual bene-

* Mr. Bicknell's ſhare of the work is ſuppoſed to conſiſt of all the poetry *not* marked thus (") in the preſent edition. When he died, he was advancing to eminence at the bar of the Court of Chancery, and ſeems to have chiefly

benevolence combined with his uſual energy. And although his dedication contains remarks by no means complimentary to the men and manners of modern times, its ſincerity may juſtly challenge reſpect and admiration. The exalted ſentiments it diſplays, did not figure in his writings only, but have been nobly exemplified in his life. Viewing the detail of that life which was in ſome degree of a public, becauſe a political nature, the eye of malice inquires in vain to prove that "his heart diſgraced the theories of his underſtanding;" and inaſmuch as the fame of a political hero, like the virtue of Cæſar's wife, ſhould be unaſ-

chiefly limited his talents to profeſſional objects. Mr. Day reſumed the ſubject of ſlavery, in a letter to the Americans, which is re-printed at the end of this work, under the title of a Fragment of an Original Letter on the Slavery of Negroes.

ſailed by ſuſpicion,* as well as not open to juſt reproaches, it is thought but a due tribute to the memory of the writer to make public the following letter which related to the ſecond edition. Beſides a clear expoſition of the motives that governed him in writing for the public eye, the reader will ſee in it how ſtrenuouſly he laboured to diffuſe over his actions, what he elegantly terms elſewhere, the delicate colouring of private honeſty and integrity. May the true patriot

* It ſeems ſome perſons are convinced Mr. Day would have embraced a late occaſion of defending Paine. And why may not the exact reverſe be ſuppoſed with equal propriety? If a man has enliſted in a party, he too often judges he is bound in duty and in honour to go all lengths with it, and there might have been ſome pretence for judging the above gentleman by ſuch rule, had he not uniformly avoided all connections that would controul him in the exerciſe of a ſovereign liberty, the acting as he pleaſed in purſuit of the public good.

he

he ſketches, be found a uſeful touchſtone applied to ſome of the queſtionable ſhapes of the precent criſis!

Letter to JOHN BICKNELL, Eſquire.

" DEAR BICKNELL,

" YOU ſhould have heard from me ſoon-
" er, had I not been engaged in a three
" weeks tour through Holland, which has
" prevented my receiving your letter till a
" fortnight after its arrival. The objec-
" tions I had to your diſpoſing of the work
" to a bookſeller were ſolely founded
" upon the fear of ſeeing ſome ſuch ingeni-

" ous advertiſements announce the Dying
" Negro, as formerly have done Richard
" Plantagenet, and of loſing the power of
" making ſuch future alterations as we may
" judge expedient. Provided you attend to
" both theſe objects, I am perfectly indiffe-
" rent whether the next edition be printed
" upon our account or that of Mr. Flexney.

" If you examine my opinions upon this
" ſubject, I am perſuaded you will ceaſe to
" accuſe them of too ſcrupulous a delicacy.
" You muſt be ſenſible that there are
" many actions in life, which are in them-
" ſelves innocent, yet when omitted reflect
" a degree of honor upon the perſon who
" might have done them; many which
" there is neither infamy nor crime in
" omitting, yet produce the higheſt opi-

" nion, and the greateſt glory to the actor.
" I think a perſon of real ſentiment ſhould
" not only confine himſelf to the avoiding
" whatever is abſolutely unjuſt or criminal,
" but ſhould aſpire to the reputation, and
" what is more, the conſciouſneſs of doing
" ſomething more than his duty. If you
" examine the actions in ancient hiſtory,
" whether real or fabulous, which moſt
" excite your wonder and admiration, you
" will find them chiefly of this claſs. Moſt
" of them are voluntary ſacrifices of fortune,
" life, or pleaſure, which might have been
" omitted without neceſſarily occaſioning
" the accuſation of cowardice or crime.
" We live in an age which requires not,
" nor admits, ſacrifices of much importance
" or difficulty: yet an obſcure ſtation, and
" a private life, ſometimes furniſhes an op-
" portunity

" portunity for a delicate mind to diſcover
" its natural bias.

" In our difference of opinion about re-
" ceiving the premium in caſe it ſhould be
" adjudged to us, I remember I thought it
" would be better to refuſe the prize than to
" accept it, though I attached neither in-
" famy nor impropriety to the acceptance
" of it. Theſe were my reaſons—ſince we
" know any thing of mankind, one of the
" moſt conſpicuous claſſes amongſt them
" has been that which, either as legiſlators,
" moraliſts, or philoſophers, has pretended
" to inſtruct the reſt. All of theſe have
" taken credit for a love of truth and hu-
" man nature, as the incitement and ſource
" of all their labours. Some few, by a ge-
" nerous diſintereſtedneſs, or by a voluntary
" renun-

BRITISH
22 NO 92
MUSEUM

G. Metz del

I. Neagle Sc.

To you this unpolluted blood I pour.
To you that Spirit which ye gave restore.

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" renunciation of the goods of fortune, have
" ſhewn that they were ſincere: but by
" much the greater part, by omitting no op-
" portunity of ſeizing thoſe very things
" which they pretended to deſpiſe, have diſ-
" covered the impoſture they meditated, and
" converted the eſteem and confidence of
" the world into ſuſpicion and contempt.
" In this ſtate of things the firſt duty of
" every man who profeſſes the difficult and
" the glorious taſk of enlightening his fel-
" low creatures, ſhould be to prove himſelf
" in every inſtance which occurs, diſinte-
" reſted: it is this which gives the greateſt
" poſſible force to his writings, and the
" greateſt influence among beings who na-
" turally recur from his doctrine to his life.
" It is this alone which can perſuade man-
" kind that there is ſomething more in ſome

" men's pretenſions to virtue than a ſubtle
" ſcheme of uniting the favourable opinion
" of the world to thoſe advantages for which
" ſo many are excited to forfeit it.

" If a man of real genius ariſes and in-
" ſtructs the world upon principles like
" theſe, there is nothing wanting to the dig-
" nity of his fame, or the ſatisfaction of his
" own mind. He has diſcharged every
" duty, and whether he ſucceed or fail, he
" may retire with peace to the grave, or to
" the tranquillity of an honourable leiſure.
" If a man of inferior talents miſtakes his
" part, and endeavours to ſuſtain a charac-
" ter he was not born to fill, he receives at
" leaſt this comfort in his ill ſucceſs, that he
" has contended for an honourable prize,
" and failed without diſgrace. Among

" which ever of the two the authors of the
" Dying Negro may find a place, I cannot
" now determine: but I own I could not
" eaſily reconcile my mind, after having
" talked of ſtoiciſm and J. J. Rouſſeau, the
" dignity of human nature and diſintereſted-
" neſs in public, to thank any ſet of per-
" ſons for preſenting truth, virtue, huma-
" nity, and J. J. Rouſſeau, with an hun-
" dred guineas.

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Hague, Aug. 4, 1774.

DEDI-

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following POEM *was occaſioned by a fact which had recently happened at the time of its firſt publication, in* 1773. *A Negro, belonging to the Captain of a Weſt-Indiaman, having agreed to marry a white woman, his fellow-ſervant, in order to effect his purpoſe, had left his maſter's houſe, and procured himſelf to be baptized; but being detected and taken, he was ſent on board the Captain's veſſel then lying in the river; where, finding no chance of eſcaping, and preferring death to another voyage to America, he took an opportunity of ſtabbing himſelf. As ſoon as his determination is fixed, he is ſuppoſed to write this Epiſtle to his intended wife.*

[THE whole of the Dedication, and thofe lines in the Poem which are preceded by inverted commas, were written by Mr. Day, and are now printed from a copy marked and given by him to Mr. Stockdale for publication.]

Piccadilly,
Nov. 15, 1792.

DEDICATION.

HAVING been, through indignation, betrayed into the dangerous character of an Author, I ſought, among the profeſſed philoſophers of the eighteenth century, one whoſe name I might conſiſtently prefix to an aſſertion of the rights of nature, and who would not bluſh at the homage of of an unknown and unambitious bard. But I found that modern Philoſophy herſelf participated of the refinement of modern manners: ſhe has forgotten that ſhe once

inhabited the lowly cot of Socrates, and ſhared the frugal means of Epaminondas; ſhe no longer numbers in her train Senators and Generals, who deſcending from ſeats of magiſtracy, or cars of triumph, did not diſdain to cultivate with their victorious arms that earth which they had defended with their blood. Her votaries are not now thoſe ſtubborn ſouls who defied the tyrant on his throne, or in his death vindicated the rights of their country and of mankind. Nor are the rugged manners of Cato and Brutus now formidable to uſurpers; nor do the harſh principles of Diogenes ſuffuſe a momentary bluſh upon the cheek of monarchy. Modern Philoſophy, like modern Honor, has choſen her reſidence in courts and palaces. There we find her favoured votaries proſtrate at the foot of thrones, and

kiſſing

kiſſing the ſacred duſt. If ſhe ſpeaks, it is to join her whiſpers to the thunders of prerogative, and to teach the ſubject world, that neither the will of Heaven, nor of Heaven deſcended Kings, muſt be oppoſed.

Little qualified to ſacrifice at the altars of this new divinity, I dared not implore the patronage of its miniſters and prieſts; ſtill leſs did I find myſelf diſpoſed to invoke thoſe literati of the Continent, who are enemies to princes, yet ſtoop to flatter their minions and ſycophants; moraliſts, yet men of pleaſure; philoſophers, yet foes to natural religion; ſceptics, yet dogmatical; and who, while they profeſs diſintereſtedneſs and independence, lead the venal muſes to voluntary proſtitution. Yet I found one man, whoſe matchleſs eloquence is leſs admirable

mirable than the fortitude with which he has developed the principles, and defended the rights of human nature; whoſe virtue is as unequalled as his genius, and whoſe life is a nobler pattern of imitation than his writings; who, rejecting the ſupercilious bounty of the vain, yet unpitying and ungenerous, Great; exerts a painful induſtry amidſt the evils and infirmities of old age, and prefers exile, poverty, and obſcurity, to all the riches and the honors which ambitious meanneſs extorts from Kings.—After this portrait, is it neceſſary to ſubſcribe a name, and to acknowledge, that I dedicate this poem to JEAN JAQUES ROSSEAU?

It is probable that this tribute to your virtues may never reach your ears, and that the following lines, like the occaſion of them,

them, will ſoon be conſigned to oblivion. Yet on this firſt, and probably laſt occaſion, in which I ſhall obtrude my ſentiments upon the world, I may be excuſed, if I inſcribe a piece, whoſe only merit is the humanity and freedom of its ſentiments, to that man, from whoſe writings I have principally derived them. Happy ſhould I eſteem myſelf could theſe feeble efforts once more awaken that irreſiſtible eloquence, which was never proſtituted to falſhood, or denied to truth; thoſe talents of reaſoning and inveſtigation, which can never fail to convince the mind that is not debaſed by voluntary and incorrigible error; and that virtuous enthuſiaſm, which ſeems inſpired by Heaven itſelf for the inſtruction of its creatures. How ſhould I rejoice to ſee a cauſe like this reſcued from my weak pen;

to ſee the rights of humanity vindicated by him, who moſt intimately feels their force, and is moſt capable of expreſſing what he feels; to ſee that inſolence, that ſucceſsful avarice confounded, which, under the maſk of commerce, has already ravaged the two extremities of the globe!—Aſtoniſh and inſtruct poſterity by the dreadful ſpectacle of human crimes; and while you repreſent in one quarter of the world a band of inſatiable wretches, ſpreading unprovoked deſolation over its moſt beautiful regions; maſſacring the Bramin in the midſt of his uncontaminated feaſts, and ſtaining with blood the pureſt altars of the Deity; let the other exhibit a race of Chriſtian merchants, daily trafficking for hecatombs of their fellow-creatures in a lot; exhauſting *Africa* to ſupply with ſlaves the countries they have depopu-

depopulated in *America*;* and annually reducing millions to a ſtate of miſery ſtill more dreadful than death itſelf.—Should there be room for ſcenes leſs ſtriking, though equally inſtructive and important, let your enchanting pencil exhibit a nation renowned for arts and arms; let the ſurrounding ocean be covered with her fleets; and let her boaſt an inflexible ſternneſs, and an unconquerable valour. Paint a ſavage and gloomy liberty exulting amidſt the ſhock of foreign invaſions and domeſtic tumults: let her wield a bloody ax, and trample alike on the mitre and the diadem: let ſuperſtition and civil war conſpire to exalt her, until ſhe has triumphed over oppoſition, and erected a

* In the ſingle Iſland of *Jamaica* above 60,000 of the natives are computed to have been cruelly exterminated by the firſt European ſettlers there.

temple, whoſe foundations appear durable, as the world itſelf. Beneath a milder ſky let peace introduce the genius and arts which adorned the ſtates of Athens and of Rome, without inſuring their duration: let gentler manners, and a leſs ferocious dignity ſucceed; let philoſophy and ſcience glory in a race of illuſtrious diſciples, whoſe labours may diſpel the gloom of fanaticiſm, and teach mankind whatever the Almighty has permitted them to know.—Here, while the delighted eye of preſumption gazes with rapture, and pronounces the tablet perfect and eternal,—reverſe the ſcene, and inſcribe the mortifying leſſon of human imbecility. Introduce commerce and proſperity ſpreading over the land, and enervating the minds of men with a ſecret, but ſwift infection. Let avarice and ſenſuality ſucceed to honor;

nor; faction and ſervitude invade the aſylum of liberty; and manly reaſon, like a fettered lion, be dragged in triumph by faſhion and caprice.—Such are the ſcenes I would preſent to my countrymen, could I boaſt an eloquence like your's, to explain the eternal principles which Providence has decreed, ſhall influence the fate of nations; the cauſes which exalt them to ſecurity and dominion, or plunge them into that abyſs of baſeneſs and corruption, from whence they can no more emerge: ſuch are the leſſons for which you have been proſcribed and perſecuted by a world which you have enlightened. Yet has not the ingratitude of mankind ever tainted your philanthropy. You have taught us, that the ſublime maxims of philoſophy are not always confined to indolent ſpeculation; you have ſhewn

that a ſtoical ſeverity is not always inconſiſtent with a feeling heart; and that the ſimplicity of ignorance is compatible with the moſt exalted genius.*

The trifle now inſcribed with your name, was occaſioned by a particular fact; but to the diſgrace of human nature, the ſubject is ſufficiently general to intereſt every heart not totally impenetrable. We boaſt of the gentleneſs of our manners, and think the rugged virtues of antiquity ill-adapted to the genius of the preſent times. When you

* For tho' I fly to 'ſcape from fortune's rage,
And bear the ſcars of envy, ſpite, and ſcorn,
Yet with mankind no horrid war I wage,
Yet with no impious ſpleen my breaſt is torn:
For virtue loſt, and ruin'd man, I mourn.

BEATTIE.

aſk if Brutus ſold his country, or the Spartan matrons frequented aſſemblies of nocturnal riot, it is thought a ſufficient anſwer to ſay, that we do not expoſe our children, or whip them at the altar of Diana, and that this is the age of generous ſentiment, and refined humanity. I will not compare the education of an ancient Spartan with that of a Britiſh nobleman. Let eunuchs and *figurants*, thoſe reſpectable guardians of modern diſcipline, inſult the memory of Lycurgus; and fellows of colleges eſtabliſh their monkiſh inſtitutions on the ruin of the Lyceum. Let the preſent age enjoy the boldeſt panegyrics its admirers can beſtow. But if our boaſted improvements, and frivolous politeneſs, be well acquired by the loſs of manly firmneſs and independence, if in order to feel as men it be neceſſary to

adopt

adopt the manners of women, let us at leaſt be conſiſtent, or mingle the exceſſes of barbariſm with the weakneſſes of civilization. There are certain forms in which vice appears not only monſtrous, but ridiculous, the cruelty of Nero is more diſguſting than that of Tiberius. When a benevolent mind contemplates the republic of Lycurgus, its admiration is mixed with a degree of horror. We behold a band of determined patriots, irreſiſtible in war, and inflexible in peace; ſouls to which the ſeverity of virtue was more engaging than its enjoyments; and who ſeemed to court the dangers of combat, only that they might refuſe the rewards of victory. Yet this admirable republic is tainted by atrocities, which tarniſh the luſtre of its ſublime inſtitutions. When we reflect that to form a ſmall ſociety of heroes,

heroes, a much greater number of men ſunk below the rank of brutes; when we conſider the unfortunate *Helotes*, abuſed, inſulted, and enſlaved; we leſs admire the exaltation of one part of our ſpecies, than we execrate the degradation of another: heroiſm becomes diſpleaſing at ſuch a price, and we prefer the calm of mediocrity to the terrors of ſo ſtormy an excellence. But let us not too haſtily triumph in the ſhame of Sparta, leſt we aggravate our own condemnation. Let us remember, there is a people who ſhare the government and name of Britons; among whom the cruelty of Sparta is renewed without its virtue. It was ſome excuſe for the diſciples of Lycurgus, that if one man had been created by Heaven to obey another, the citizens he had formed beſt deſerved the empire of the world. But what

has

has *America* to boaſt? What are the graces or the virtues which diſtinguiſh its inhabitants? What are *their* triumphs in war, or their inventions in peace? Inglorious ſoldiers, yet ſeditious citizens; ſordid merchants, and indolent uſurpers; behold the men, whoſe avarice has been more fatal to the intereſts of humanity, and has more deſolated the world than the ambition of its ancient Conquerors! For them the Negro is dragged from his cottage, and his plantane ſhade;*—by them the fury of African

* Theſe obſervations are by no means to be confined to the Weſt Indies. "The number of Negroes in the "Southern Colonies of North America is equal, if not "ſuperior, to that of the white men. Their condition is "truly pitiable; their labour exceſſively hard, their diet "poor and ſcanty, their treatment cruel and oppreſſive. "They cannot but be a ſubject of terror to thoſe who ſo "inhumanly tyrannize over them."—*Barnaby's Travels through North America in* 1760.

tyrants is ſtimulated by pernicious gold; the rights of nature are invaded; and European faith becomes infamous throughout the globe. Yet, ſuch is the inconſiſtency of mankind! theſe are the men whoſe clamours for liberty and independence are heard acroſs the Atlantic ocean! Murmurings and rebellions are the firſt fruits of their gratitude, and thus America recompenſes Europe for the protection ſhe has beſtowed.—But are the hopes and fortunes of the ſpecies indeed fallen ſo low, that freedom will deſert that country, whoſe warriors and philoſophers have ſo often conſpired to defend her, to ſeek an aſylum in the foreſts of America?—Much as an impartial obſerver may find to blame in Britain, her colonies, I fear, are not more acceptable to Providence.—Let the wild, inconſiſtent claims of

America prevail, when they ſhall be unmixed with the clank of chains, and the groans of anguiſh. Let her aim a dagger at the breaſt of her milder parent, if ſhe can advance a ſtep without trampling on the dead and dying carcaſſes of her ſlaves:—But let her remember, that it is in Britain alone, that laws are equally favourable to liberty and humanity; that it is in Britain the ſacred rights of nature have received their moſt awful ratification.—Could I flatter myſelf that I might contribute to ſuch a cauſe, or intereſt the generous minds of my countrymen to extend an ampler protection to the moſt innocent and miſerable of their own ſpecies, I ſhould congratulate myſelf that I had not lived in vain.—For the reſt, I truſt, that the motive of the writer will, in your eyes, atone for his defects, and that

you

you will allow him the only merit he aſſumes, truth and ſincerity, when he ſubſcribes himſelf a friend to human nature; and conſequently,

Your FRIEND and ADMIRER.

AN

EPISTLE, &c.

ARM'D with thy ſad laſt gift—the pow'r to die,
Thy ſhafts, ſtern Fortune, now I can defy;
Thy dreadful mercy points at length the ſhore,
Where all is peace, and men are ſlaves no more;
—This weapon, ev'n in chains, the brave can wield,
And vanquiſh'd quit triumphantly the field:
—Beneath ſuch wrongs let pallid Chriſtians live,
Such they can perpetrate, and may forgive.

" Yet

" Yet while I tread that gulph's tremendous brink,
" Where nature ſhudders, and where beings ſink,
Ere yet this hand a life of torment cloſe,
And end by one determin'd ſtroke my woes,
" Is there a fond regret, which moves my mind
" To pauſe, and caſt a ling'ring look behind?
—O my lov'd bride!—for I have call'd thee mine,
Dearer than life, whom I with life reſign,
" For thee ev'n here this faithful heart ſhall glow,
" A pang ſhall rend me, and a tear ſhall flow.—
How ſhall I ſoothe thy grief, ſince fate denies
Thy pious duties to my cloſing eyes?
" I cannot claſp thee in a laſt embrace,
" Nor gaze in ſilent anguiſh on thy face;
" I cannot raiſe theſe fetter'd arms for thee,
" To aſk that mercy heav'n denies to me;
Yet let thy tender breaſt my ſorrows ſhare,
Bleed for my wounds, and feel my deep deſpair.

Yet let thy tears bedew a wretch's grave,
Whom Fate forbade thy tenderneſs to ſave.
Receive theſe ſighs—to thee my ſoul I breathe,
Fond love in dying groans is all I can bequeath.

Why did I, ſlave, beyond my lot aſpire?
Why didſt thou fan the inauſpicious fire?
For thee I bade my drooping ſoul revive;
For thee alone I could have borne to live;
And love, I ſaid, ſhall make me large amends,
For perſecuting foes, and faithleſs friends:
Fool that I was! enur'd ſo long to pain,
To truſt to hope, or dream of joy again.
Joy, ſtranger gueſt, my eaſy faith betray'd,
And love now points to death's eternal ſhade;
There, while I reſt from mis'ry's galling load,
Be thou the care of ev'ry pitying God;

Nor may that Dæmon's unpropitious pow'r,
Who ſhed his influence on my natal hour,
Purſue thee too with unrelenting hate,
And blend with mine the colour of thy fate.
For thee may thoſe ſoft hours return again,
When pleaſure led thee ſmiling o'er the plain.
Ere, like ſome hell-born ſpectre of diſmay,
I croſs'd thy path, and darken'd all the way.
Ye waving groves, which from this cell I view!
Ye meads, now glitt'ring with the morning dew!
Ye flowers, which bluſh on yonder hated ſhore,
That at my baneful ſtep ſhall fade no more,
A long farewel!—I aſk no vernal bloom—
No pageant wreaths to wither on my tomb.
—Let ſerpents hiſs and night-ſhade blacken there,
To mark the friendleſs victim of deſpair!

And better in th' untimely grave to rot,
The world and all its cruelties forgot,
Than, dragg'd once more beyond the Weſtern main,
To groan beneath ſome daſtard planter's chain,
Where my poor countrymen in bondage wait
The ſlow enfranchiſement of ling'ring fate.
Oh! my heart ſinks, my dying eyes o'erflow,
When mem'ry paints the picture of their woe!
For I have ſeen them, e'er the dawn of day,
Rouz'd by the laſh, begin their cheerleſs way;
Greeting with groans unwelcome morn's return,
While rage and ſhame their gloomy boſoms burn;
And, chiding ev'ry hour the ſlow-pac'd ſun,
Endure their toils 'till all his race was run;
" No eye to mark their ſuff'rings with a tear,
" No friend to comfort and no hope to cheer;
Then like the dull unpitied brutes repair
To ſtalls as wretched, and as coarſe a fare;

Thank heav'n, one day of miſery was o'er,
And ſink to ſleep, and wiſh to wake no more.—
Sleep on! ye loſt companions of my woes,
For whom in death this tear of pity flows;
Sleep, and enjoy the only boon of heav'n
To you in common with your tyrants giv'n!
O while ſoft ſlumber from their couches flies,
Still may the balmy bleſſing ſteep your eyes;
In ſwift oblivion lull awhile your woes,
And brighteſt viſions gladden the repoſe!
Let fancy, then, unconſcious of the change,
Thro' our own fields and native foreſts range;
Waft ye to each once-haunted ſtream and grove,
And viſit ev'ry long-loſt ſcene ye love!
—I ſleep no more—nor in the midnight ſhade
Invoke ideal phantoms to my aid;
Nor wake again abandon'd and forlorn,
To find each dear deluſion fled at morn;

A ſlow

A ſlow conſuming death let others wait,
I ſnatch deſtruction from unwilling fate :—
Yon ruddy ſtreaks the riſing ſun proclaim,
That never more ſhall beam upon my ſhame ;
Bright orb ! for others let thy glory ſhine,
Mature the golden grain and purple vine,
While fetter'd Afric ſtill for Europe toils,
And Nature's plund'rers riot on her ſpoils ;
Be theirs the gifts thy partial rays ſupply,
Be mine the gloomy privilege to die.

And thou, whoſe impious avarice and pride
The holy Croſs to my ſad brows deny'd,
Forbade me Nature's common rights to claim,
Or ſhare with thee a Chriſtian's ſacred name ;
Thou too, farewel !—for not beyond the grave
Extends thy pow'r, nor is my duſt thy ſlave.

In vain Heav'n ſpread ſo wide the ſwelling ſea,
Vaſt wat'ry barrier, 'twixt thy world and me;
Swift round the globe, by earth nor Heav'n controul'd,
Fly ſtern oppreſſion, and dire luſt of gold.
Where'er the hell-hounds mark their bloody way,
Still nature groans, and man becomes their prey.
In the wild waſtes of Afric's ſandy plain,
Where roars the lion thro' his drear domain,
To curb the ſavage monarch in the chace,
There too Heav'n planted Man's majeſtic race;
Bade reaſon's ſons with nobler titles riſe,
Lift high their brow ſublime and ſcan the ſkies.
What tho' the ſun in his meridian blaze
Dart on their naked limbs his ſcorching rays;
What tho' no roſy tints adorn their face,
No ſilken treſſes ſhine with flowing grace;
Yet of ethereal temper are their ſouls,
And in their veins the tide of honour rolls;

And valour kindles there the hero's flame,
Contempt of death, and thirſt of martial fame;
And pity melts the ſympathiſing breaſt,
Ah! fatal virtue!—for the brave diſtreſt.

" My tortur'd boſom, ſad remembrance ſpare!
" Why doſt thou plant thy keeneſt daggers there?
" And ſhew me what I was, and aggravate deſpair?
" Ye ſtreams of Gambia, and thou ſacred ſhade!
" Where in my youth's firſt dawn I joyful ſtray'd,
" Oft have I rouz'd, amid your caverns dim,
" The howling tyger, and the lion grim;
" In vain they gloried in their headlong force,
" My jav'lin pierc'd them in their raging courſe.
" But little did my boding mind bewray,
" The victor and his hopes were doom'd a prey
" To human brutes more fell, more cruel far than they.

" Ah! what avails the conqu'ror's bloody meed,
" The gen'rous purpoſe, or the dauntleſs deed!
" This hapleſs breaſt expos'd on ev'ry plain,
" And liberty preferr'd to life in vain?
" Fall'n are my trophies, blaſted is my fame,
" Myſelf become a thing without a name,
" The ſport of haughty lords, and ev'n of ſlaves the ſhame.

" Curſt be the winds, and curſt the tides which bore
" Theſe European robbers to our ſhore!
" O be that hour involv'd in endleſs night,
" When firſt their ſtreamers met my wond'ring ſight!
" I call'd the warriors from the mountain's ſteep,
" To meet theſe unknown terrors of the deep;
" Rouz'd by my voice, their gen'rous boſoms glow,
" They ruſh indignant, and demand the foe,
" And poize the darts of death, and twang the bended bow:

" When

" When lo! advancing o'er the ſea-beat plain,
" I mark'd the leader of a warlike train:
" Unlike his features to our ſwarthy race;
" And golden hair play'd round his ruddy face.
" While with inſidious ſmile and lifted hand,
" He thus accoſts our unſuſpecting band:
" ' Ye valiant chiefs, whom love of glory leads
" ' To martial combats, and heroic deeds;
" ' No fierce invader your retreat explores,
" ' No hoſtile banner waves along your ſhores.
" ' From the dread tempeſts of the deep we fly,
" ' Then lay, ye chiefs, theſe pointed terrors by:
" ' And O, your hoſpitable cares extend,
" ' So may ye never need the aid we lend!
" ' So may ye ſtill repeat to ev'ry grove
" ' The ſongs of freedom, and the ſtrains of love!'
" Soft as the accents of the traitor flow,
" We melt with pity, and unbend the bow;

" With

" With lib'ral hand our choiceſt gifts we bring,
" And point the wand'rers to the freſheſt ſpring.
" Nine days we feaſted on the Gambian ſtrand,
" And ſongs of friendſhip echo'd o'er the land.*
" When the tenth morn her riſing luſtre gave,
" The chief approach'd me by the ſounding wave.
" ' O, youth,' he ſaid, ' what gifts can we beſtow,
" ' Or how requite the mighty debt we owe?
" ' For lo! propitious to our vows, the gale
" ' With milder omens fills the ſwelling ſail.

* " Which way ſoever I turned my eyes on this ſpot, I beheld a perfect image of pure nature, an agreeable ſolitude bounded on every ſide by charming landſcapes; the rural ſituation of cottages in the midſt of trees; the eaſe and indolence of the Negroes, reclined under the ſhade of their ſpreading foliage; the ſimplicity of their dreſs and manners; the whole revived in my mind the idea of our firſt parents, and I ſeemed to contemplate the world in its primitive ſtate. They are, generally ſpeaking, very good-natured, ſociable, and obliging."——*M. Adanſon's Voyage to Senegal, &c.*

" ' To-

" ' To-morrow's ſun ſhall ſee our ſhips explore
' Theſe deeps, and quit your hoſpitable ſhore.
" ' Yet while we linger, let us ſtill employ
" ' The number'd hours in friendſhip and in joy ;
" ' Aſcend our ſhips, their treaſures are your own,
" ' And taſte the produce of a world unknown.'

" He ſpoke ; with fatal eagerneſs we burn,—
" And quit the ſhores, undeſtin'd to return!
" The ſmiling traitors with inſidious care
" The goblet proffer, and the feaſt prepare,
" 'Till dark oblivion ſhades our cloſing eyes,
" And all diſarm'd each fainting warrior lies.
" O wretches! to your future evils blind!
" O morn for ever preſent to my mind!
" When burſting from the treach'rous bands of ſleep,
" Rouz'd by the murmurs of the daſhing deep,

" I woke to bondage and ignoble pains,

" And all the horrors of a life in chains.*

" Ye Gods of Afric! in that dreadful hour

" Where were your thunders and avenging pow'r!

" Did not my pray'rs, my groans, my tears invoke

" Your ſlumb'ring juſtice to direct the ſtroke?

* " As we paſſed along the coaſt, we very often lay before a town, and fired a gun for the natives to come off, but no ſoul came near us. At length we learned by ſome ſhips that were trading down the coaſt, that the natives came ſeldom on board an Engliſh ſhip, for fear of being detained or carried off; yet at laſt ſome ventured on board; but if theſe chanced to ſpy any arms, they would all immediately take to their canoes, and make the beſt of their way home."———*Smith's Voyage to Guinea.*

" It is well known that many of the European nations have, very unjuſtly and inhumanly, without any provocation, ſtolen away, from time to time, abundance of the people, not only on this coaſt, but almoſt every where in Guinea, who have come on board their ſhip in a harmleſs and confiding manner; theſe they have in great numbers carried away, and ſold in the plantations."——— *J. Barbot's Deſcription of Guinea.*

" No

" No pow'r deſcended to aſſiſt the brave,
" No lightnings flaſh'd, and I became a ſlave.
From lord to lord my wretched carcaſe ſold,
In Chriſtian traffic, for their ſordid gold:
Fate's blackeſt clouds were gather'd o'er my head;
And, burſting now, they mix me with the dead.

" Yet when my fortune caſt my lot with thine,
" And bade beneath one roof our labours join,
" Surpriz'd I felt the tumults of my breaſt
" Lull'd by thy beauties to unwonted reſt.
" Deluſive hopes my changing ſoul enflame,
" And gentler tranſports agitate my frame.
What tho' obſcure thy birth, ſuperior grace
Shone in the glowing features of thy face.
Ne'er had my youth ſuch winning ſoftneſs ſeen,
Where Afric's ſable beauties dance the green,

When ſome ſweet maid receives her lover's vow,
And binds the offer'd chaplet to her brow.
" While on thy languid eyes I fondly gaze,
" And trembling meet the luſtre of their rays,
" Thou, gentle virgin, thou didſt not deſpiſe
" The humble homage of a captive's ſighs.
" By heav'n abandon'd, and by man betray'd,
" Each hope reſign'd of comfort or of aid,
" Thy gen'rous love could ev'ry ſorrow end,
" In thee I found a miſtreſs and a friend;
" Still as I told the ſtory of my woes,
" With heaving ſighs thy lovely boſom roſe;
" The trickling drops of liquid cryſtal ſtole
" Down thy fair cheek and mark'd thy pitying ſoul:
" Dear drops! upon my bleeding heart, like balm
" They fell, and ſoon my tortur'd mind grew calm;
Then my lov'd country, parents, friends forgot;
Heav'n I abſolv'd, nor murmur'd at my lot;

" Thy

" Thy ſacred ſmiles could ev'ry pang remove,

" And liberty became leſs dear than love.

—" And I have lov'd thee with as pure a fire,

" As man e'er felt, or woman could inſpire:

" No pangs like theſe my pallid tyrants know,

" Not ſuch their tranſports, and not ſuch their woe.

" Their ſofter frames a feeble ſoul conceal,

" A ſoul unus'd to pity or to feel;

" Damp'd by baſe lucre, and repell'd by fear,

" Each nobler paſſion faintly blazes here.

" Not ſuch the mortals burning Afric breeds,

" Mother of virtues and heroic deeds!

" Deſcended from yon radiant orb, they claim

" Sublimer courage, and a fiercer flame.

" Nature has there, unchill'd by art, impreſt

" Her awful majeſty on ev'ry breaſt.

" Where'er

" Where'er ſhe leads, impatient of controul,
" The dauntleſs Negro ruſhes to the goal;
" Firm in his love, reſiſtleſs in his hate,
" His arm is conqueſt, and his frown is fate.

" What fond affection in my boſom reigns!
" What ſoft emotions mingle with my pains!
" Still as thy form before my mind appears,
" My haggard eyes are bath'd in guſhing tears;
" Thy lov'd idea ruſhes to my heart,
" And ſtern deſpair ſuſpends the lifted dart——
" O could I burſt theſe fetters which reſtrain
" My ſtruggling limbs, and waft thee o'er the main
" To ſome far diſtant ſhore, where Ocean roars
" In horrid tempeſts round the gloomy ſhores;
" To ſome wild mountain's ſolitary ſhade,
" Where never European faith betray'd;

" How joyful could I, of thy love ſecure,
" Meet ev'ry danger, ev'ry toil endure!
" For thee I'd climb the rock, explore the flood,
" And tame the famiſh'd ſavage of the wood.
" When ſcorching ſummer drinks the ſhrinking ſtreams,
" My care ſhould ſcreen thee from its ſultry beams;
" At noon I'd crown thee with the faireſt flowers,
" At eve I'd lead thee to the ſafeſt bowers;
" And when bleak winter howl'd around the cave,
" For thee his horrors and his ſtorms I'd brave;
" Nor ſnows nor raging winds ſhould damp my ſoul,
" Nor ſuch a night as ſhrowds the duſky pole:
" O'er the dark waves my bounding ſkiff I'd guide,
" To pierce each mightier monſter of the tide;
" Thro' frozen foreſts force my dreadful way,
" In their own dens to rouze the beaſts of prey;
" Nor other bleſſing aſk, if this might prove
" How fix'd my paſſion, and how fond my love.

" —Then

" —Then ſhould vain fortune to my ſight diſplay
" All that her anger now has ſnatch'd away;
" Treaſures more vaſt than Av'rice e'er deſign'd
" In midnight viſions to a Chriſtian's mind;
" The Monarch's diamed, the Conqu'ror's meed,
" That empty prize for which the valiant bleed;
" All that ambition ſtrives to ſnatch from fate,
" All that the Gods e'er laviſh'd in their hate;
" Not theſe ſhould win thy lover from thy arms,
" Or tempt a moment's abſence from thy charms;
" Indignant would I fly theſe guilty climes,
" And ſcorn their glories as I hate their crimes!

But whither does my wand'ring fancy rove?
Hence ye wild wiſhes of deſponding love!
—Ah! where is now that voice which lull'd my woes;
That Angel-face, which ſooth'd me to repoſe?

By

By Nature tempted, and with paſſion blind,
Are theſe the joys Hope whiſper'd to my mind?
Is this the end of conſtancy like thine?
Are theſe the tranſports of a love like mine?
My hopes, my joys, are vaniſh'd into air,
And now of all that once engag'd my care,
Theſe chains alone remain, this weapon and deſpair.

—So be thy life's gay proſpects all o'ercaſt,
All thy fond hopes dire diſappointment blaſt!
Thus end thy golden viſions, ſon of pride!
Whoſe ruthleſs ruffians tore me from my bride;
That beauteous prize Heav'n had reſerv'd at laſt,
Sweet recompence for all my ſorrows paſt.
O may thy harden'd boſom never prove
The tender joys of friendſhip or of love!
Yet may'ſt thou, doom'd to hopeleſs flames a prey,
In unrequited paſſion pine away!

May ev'ry tranſport violate thy reſt,
Which tears the jealous lover's gloomy breaſt!
May ſecret anguiſh gnaw thy cruel heart,
'Till death in all his terrors wing the dart;
Then, to complete the horror of thy doom,
A favour'd rival ſmile upon thy tomb!

Why does my ling'ring ſoul her flight delay?
Come, lovely maid, and gild the dreary way!
" Come, wildly ruſhing with diſorder'd charms,
" And claſp thy bleeding lover in thy arms;
" Cloſe his ſad eyes, receive his parting breath,
" And ſooth him ſinking to the ſhades of death!
" O come—thy preſence can my pangs beguile,
" And bid th' inexorable tyrant ſmile;
" Tranſported will I languiſh on thy breaſt,
" And ſink enraptur'd to eternal reſt:

" The

" The hate of men, the wrongs of fate forgive,
" Forget my woes, and almoſt wiſh to live.
" —Ah! rather fly, leſt ought of doubt controul
" The dreadful purpoſe lab'ring in my ſoul;
" Tears muſt not bend me, nor thy beauties move,
" This hour I triumph over fate and love."

—Again with tenfold rage my boſom burns,
And all the tempeſt of my ſoul returns;
Again the furies fire my madding brain,
And death extends his ſhelt'ring arms in vain;
For unreveng'd I fall, unpity'd die;
And with my blood glut Pride's inſatiate eye!

" Thou Chriſtian God! to whom ſo late I bow'd,
" To whom my ſoul its new allegiance vow'd,
" When crimes like theſe thy injur'd pow'r prophane,
" O God of Nature! art thou call'd in vain?

" Didſt thou for this ſuſtain a mortal wound,

" While Heav'n, and Earth, and Hell, hung trembling round?

" That theſe vile fetters might my body bind,

" And agony like this diſtract my mind?

" On thee I call'd with reverential awe,

" Ador'd thy wiſdom, and embrac'd thy law;

" Yet mark thy deſtin'd convert as he lies,

" His groans of anguiſh, and his livid eyes,

" Theſe galling chains, polluted with his blood,

" Then bid his tongue proclaim thee juſt and good!

" But if too weak thy vaunted power to ſpare,

" Or ſuff'rings move thee not, O hear deſpair!

" Thy hopes and bleſſings I alike reſign,

" But let revenge, let ſwift revenge be mine!

" Be this proud bark, which now triumphant rides,

" Toſs'd by the winds, and ſhatter'd by the tides!

" And may theſe fiends, who now exulting view

" The horrors of my fortune, feel them too!

" Be

" Be theirs the torment of a ling'ring fate,
" Slow as thy juſtice, dreadful as my hate;
" Condemn'd to graſp the riven plank in vain,
" And chac'd by all the monſters of the main;
" And while they ſpread their ſinking arms to thee,
" Then let their fainting ſouls remember me!

" —Thanks, righteous God!—Revenge ſhall yet be mine;
" Yon flaſhing lightning gave the dreadful ſign.
" I ſee the flames of heav'nly anger hurl'd,
" I hear your thunders ſhake a guilty world.
" The time ſhall come, the fated hour is nigh,
" When guiltleſs blood ſhall penetrate the ſky.
" Amid theſe horrors, and involving night,
" Prophetic viſions flaſh before my ſight;
" Eternal juſtice wakes, and in their turn
" The vanquiſh'd triumph, and the victors mourn;"—

Lo! Diſcord, fierceſt of th' infernal band,
Fires all her ſnakes, and waves her flaming brand;
No more proud Commerce courts the weſtern gales,
But marks the lurid ſkies, and furls her ſails;
War mounts his iron car, and at his wheels
In vain ſoft Pity weeps, and Mercy kneels;
He breaths a ſavage rage thro' all the hoſt,
And ſtains with kindred blood the impious coaſt;
Then, while with horror ſick'ning Nature groans,
And earth and heav'n the monſtrous race diſowns,—
" Then the ſtern genius of my native land,
" With delegated vengeance in his hand,
" Shall raging croſs the troubled ſeas, and pour
" The plagues of Hell on yon devoted ſhore.
" What tides of ruin mark his ruthleſs way!
" How ſhriek the fiends exulting o'er their prey!
" I ſee their warriors gaſping on the ground,—
" I hear their flaming cities craſh around.—

" In

" In vain with trembling heart the coward turns,
" In vain with generous rage the valiant burns.—
" One common ruin, one promiſcuous grave,
" O'erwhelms the daſtard, and receives the brave—
" For Afric triumphs!—his avenging rage
" No tears can ſoften, and no blood aſſuage.
" He ſmites the trembling waves, and at the ſhock
" Their fleets are daſh'd upon the pointed rock.
" He waves his flaming dart, and o'er their plains,
" In mournful ſilence, deſolation reigns—
" Fly ſwift, ye years!—Ariſe, thou glorious morn!
" Thou great avenger of thy race be born!
" The conq'ror's palm and deathleſs fame be thine!
" One gen'rous ſtroke, and liberty be mine!
" —And now, ye pow'rs! to whom the brave are dear,
" Receive me falling, and your ſuppliant hear.
" To you this unpolluted blood I pour,
" To you that ſpirit which ye gave reſtore!

" I aſk

" I aſk no lazy pleaſures to poſſeſs,
" No long eternity of happineſs ;—
" But if unſtain'd by voluntary guilt,
" At your great call this being I have ſpilt,
" For all the wrongs which innocent I ſhare,
" For all I've ſuffer'd, and for all I dare ;
" O lead me to that ſpot, that ſacred ſhore,
" Where ſouls are free, and men oppreſs no more!

FINIS.

A LIST

FRAGMENT

OF AN ORIGINAL

LETTER

ON THE

SLAVERY OF THE NEGROES,

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1776.

By THOMAS DAY, Esq.

" Cette soif insatiable de l'or a donné naissance au plus infâme, au plus atroce de tous les commerces, celui des esclaves. On parle des crimes contre nature, & l'on ne cite pas celui-là comme le plus exécrable."

HISTOIRE PHILOSOPHIQUE DES DEUX INDES.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Letter was written in the year 1776, *at the requeſt of an American gentleman, who deſired to know my ſentiments upon the Slavery of the Negroes, and profeſſed an intention of reſtoring all his own to liberty, could he be convinced that duty required the ſacrifice. I therefore ſent him the following eſſay, the imperfections of which may, perhaps, be ſomething extenuated by the precipitation with which it was written. It has lain by me many years in obſcurity; nor did I chooſe to produce it during the progreſs of the American conteſt. Since the happy termination of that diſaſtrous war, I have ſhewn it to ſome of my particular friends, who have honoured me ſo far as to deſire copies, and to ſuggeſt that its publica-*

tion might not be unattended with utility. After reflecting upon the ſubject, I have choſen to comply with their wiſhes, and preſent this Fragment to the public; becauſe, whatever diſcredit it brings upon my head, it may contribute to eſtabliſh the ſincerity of my heart: and if a ſingle human being ſhould by my means be reſtored to happineſs, it is an ample recompence for all the dangers I may incur as an author. Should this eſſay ever reach America, it may, perhaps, diſpleaſe thoſe who have not learned to diſcern friends from flatterers, and to diſtinguiſh between the language of truth and calumny. Thoſe, on the contrary, who are enlightened by a more extenſive knowledge of human nature, may, perhaps, reſpect an Engliſhman, who, after daring to aſſert their cauſe through all the varied events of the late revolution, dares now with equal intrepidity aſſert the cauſe of truth and juſtice, and of that part of the human ſpecies whoſe wrongs are yet unre-

dreſſed, and almoſt unpitied. Should it be aſked why I rather publiſh a Fragment than a complete eſſay, I can only anſwer, that I reſpect truth ſo much, that I am not inclined to violate it even as an author; and that this Letter having been really written in the year 1776, *and being ſtill in the poſſeſſion of the gentleman to whom it was ſent, I do not chooſe to piece it with additions in the year* 1784.

FRAGMENT, &c.

SIR,

I WAS extremely ſurpriſed at receiving a letter, in an unknown hand, which deſired me to give my ſentiments relative to the Slavery of the Negroes; till reading to the end, I recollected the name of a gentleman, whom I had the pleaſure of ſeeing with Mr. Laurens.* Much as I am flattered by finding my

* Colonel John Laurens, ſon of Henry Laurens, Eſq. formerly Preſident of the Congreſs. This young gentleman was ſent over to England for his education, where he endeared himſelf to all who knew him, by his abilities and affectionate temper. In the beginning of the year 1777 he joined the American army,

my opinion of any conſequence with a gentleman of whom I have heard ſo advantageous a character, I am ſtill more ſurpriſed, that he can aſk it upon ſuch a queſ-

army, and from that time was foremoſt in every danger. He was preſent and diſtinguiſhed himſelf in every action of the army under General Waſhington, and was among the foremoſt that entered the Britiſh lines at York Town. He fell Auguſt 27, 1782, one of the laſt victims of this diſaſtrous war, in an obſcure ſkirmiſh with a foraging party. For ſeveral days preceding the action he had been confined to his bed by a raging fever, but left it at the call of duty and met his fate.

Thoſe who were intimately acquainted with this young man, will rank his martial qualities, by which he is chiefly known, as loweſt in the catalogue of his virtues. They will lament the untimely loſs of a clear, diſcerning mind that united the ſolid powers of the underſtanding with inflexible integrity. In him, his country has loſt one of its nobleſt and moſt uſeful citizens; his father the kindeſt and moſt affectionate friend; and to all the wretched a generous and diſintereſted patron.——O my unfortunate country! muſt I add, that when I conſider all the leaders of thy factions, all thy hereditary magiſtrates, all that are deſtined to engroſs thy dignities or ſhare thy ſpoils, I ſeek in vain a Colonel John Laurens?

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tion; a queſtion which I am ſure his own humanity and good ſenſe will be ſufficient to decide, if he attends, for a moment, to their dictates. I reſpect you, Sir, too much to doubt the ſincerity of the declaration you make, when you profeſs to be guided by reaſon and morality upon this queſtion; for this is the only arbitration which any man can have to conſult upon a ſubject like this: where they are ſilent, the voice of the whole world ought to be diſregarded; and where they approve, the diſſent of all mankind can have no influence upon a mind like your's.—But as you expreſſly deſire to know my ſentiments, I muſt wave both preface and ceremony, and addreſs you with the modeſt freedom that becomes one man when he is ſpeaking to another upon the moſt important queſtion in the univerſe. As a member of that ſociety which has now made a ſolemn appeal to Heaven, and taken up arms againſt the nation to which it owes its eſtabliſhment,

you muſt admit that there are ſuch things as right and juſtice, to which the whole human ſpecies have an indefeaſible claim. Indeed, unleſs there be ſuch a thing as juſtice, it is in vain we inquire about its precepts, or refer to its arbitration. He that admits no right but force, no juſtice but ſuperior violence, arms every man againſt himſelf, and juſtifies all exceſſes. If it be lawful to injure becauſe we can: if we may ſeize the property of another, inſult his perſon, or force him to labour for our luxury or caprice, merely becauſe he is weaker; this principle will be equally fatal to ourſelves, when fortune ſhall ſtrip us of that power which is our only prerogative, and ſhift the plea of ſuperiority. You are to remember that, upon this ſuppoſition, your ſlaves, the inſtant they ſhall become the ſtrongeſt, will have a right to the ſervices of yourſelf, and every other gentleman of the ſouthern colonies; will have a right to

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force you to labour naked in the ſun to the muſic of whips and chains; to rob you of every thing which is now dear to your indolence, or neceſſary to your pleaſures; to goad you to every ſpecies of ſervile drudgery, and puniſh you for their amuſement and caprice; will have a right to exhauſt your youth in ſervitude, and to abandon your age to wretchedneſs and diſeaſes: in one word, Sir, they will have a right to uſe *you*, as you do *them*. Let us, therefore, leave principles which can be maintained by no one but a profeſſed enemy to mankind; who would at one ſtroke extirpate every thing which alleviates the evils of life, and arm every man in an eternal war againſt his fellow-creatures, to inquire what are the real dictates of that juſtice, whoſe exiſtence, I am perſuaded, we both allow. You, therefore, admit there are certain claims, which, for want of a better name, we call rights, to which the human ſpecies has an indiſputable title. To expreſs

myſelf in other words, "There is a method of purſuing our own happineſs in ſuch a manner, that we may promote the general good at the ſame time; or, at leaſt, not interfere with it." This, our reaſon aſſures us, is the privilege of every created being; and while he confines himſelf within theſe bounds, we feel the moſt cordial approbation of his conduct. We love, and eſteem, and ſympathize with him, from the very conſtitution of our nature. On the contrary, whenever any one diſturbs or injures a being acting in this manner, or prevents him from attaining the good to which he is impelled, we feel our hatred and indignation moſt forcibly excited againſt the aggreſſor. We conſider ſuch a character as armed againſt the welfare of the world, and as one who is endeavouring to make the common good ſubſervient to his own ſelfiſhneſs. I appeal to the generoſity of your own nature for the exiſtence of theſe principles. Have they

not, a thouſand times, animated you to acts of virtue and humanity, as well as inſpired you with an involuntary reverence for all who acted from their impulſe? Have they not often pleaded the cauſe of the wretch that lay trembling and defenceleſs at your feet, and in ſpite of the prejudices of your country and education, whiſpered to your mind that one human being ought not to hold his exiſtence by the tenure of another's will? Do not theſe principles now inſpire you, and frequently impel you beyond the bounds of prudence and ſafety, while what you call your country's cauſe animates you to exertion? But this cauſe is only the united cauſe and intereſt of every particular man; thoſe rights which the great Creator taught him to diſcover when he gave him reaſon, which he urges him to defend by paſſion, and which a mind like your's prizes beyond all the gratifications of ſenſe, and dares to graſp at even while it is periſhing. This appears

to me to be a plain and conciſe deduction of morality, which means nothing more than that method or rule of conduct by which the whole human ſpecies may attain the greateſt poſſible degree of happineſs. And I rather chooſe to expreſs myſelf ſo, becauſe I thus comprehend all ſects and opinions. The religious man allows that the happineſs of the ſpecies is the great end of the Deity, which he promotes by the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate: the diſciple of Shafteſbury underſtands this, when he talks of the beauty of virtue, and the love of order; and even the gloomy pupil of Hobbes, who reſolves every thing into ſelf-intereſt, muſt allow the exiſtence of moral diſtinctions, ſo far as they influence the welfare of the ſpecies. This univerſal morality appears to me to be the only rational and legal foundation of all human government; which ought to be nothing more than the application of this general rule to particular

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ſocieties, and the enforcing it by civil eſtabliſhments. If, therefore, it be granted, that the rights of a nation are nothing more than the rights of every man in it, and that all juſt and legal authority ſuppoſes a delegated power entruſted ſolely for the purpoſe of promoting the general good, it will appear evident, that every individual in the univerſe poſſeſſes certain rights, which no man can diveſt him of without injuſtice, unleſs he be guilty of ſome crime againſt ſociety which expoſes him to its vengeance. Hence it follows, that whenever any nation attacks the rights and happineſs of another nation, it deſerves to find its own deſtruction in the attempt; and whenever any individual preſumes to exerciſe this ſpecies of authority over his fellow-creatures, he muſt be a tyrant and an oppreſſor, whom it is permitted to deſtroy by every poſſible method. Whoever would deny this, muſt either deny the exiſtence of right and juſtice entirely, and then it is in vain to

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argue; or muſt ſhew ſome natural diſtinction by which one part of the ſpecies is entitled to privileges from which the other is excluded. The firſt ſuppoſition I have already conſidered, and the ſecond is altogether abſurd; for all alterations and diſtinctions among mankind ſolely ariſe from civil government, which has no other juſt foundation than natural right; and natural right, for that reaſon, muſt be a principle of higher authority than civil government. Whenever, therefore, civil government tends to deſtroy and confound the rights of nature, it ceaſes to have any claim to our obedience; it becomes tyranny, corruption, and deſpotiſm, a peſt inſtead of a bleſſing, and ſubverſive of every purpoſe for which it was inſtituted, or ought to be continued.

I am extremely fearful of expreſſing myſelf obſcurely upon ſo abſtract a ſubject, and muſt, therefore, though with the ha-

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zard of prolixity, attempt to place it in a different light.—If you imagine any number of the human ſpecies aſſembled in ſome particular part of the globe, without any form of government eſtabliſhed among them, it is evident, that theſe individuals may either live together in ſuch a manner as to produce mutual comfort and aſſiſtance, or may be the cauſe of continual miſery to each other. No propoſition in the mathematics can be inveſtigated with more preciſion than the methods of conduct which have theſe contrary tendencies. Every diſpoſition which inclines one man to aſſiſt another, or to avoid giving him offence and doing him injury, muſt neceſſarily contribute to the common welfare, which would be perfect, were theſe diſpoſitions cultivated in the greateſt poſſible degree. On the contrary, every diſpoſition which, either by fraud or violence, tends to interrupt the perſonal ſecurity of individuals, or to deprive them of

thoſe things which they have acquired by their induſtry, is detrimental to the ſum of happineſs, and would, if carried to the greateſt poſſible degree, entirely deſtroy that part of the ſpecies.—In this view of things, morality ariſes from neceſſity, and comprehends "certain rules of conduct founded upon the relations which beings endowed with particular faculties bear to each other; which rules, when properly obſerved, produce happineſs to ſociety; but when violated or neglected, as neceſſarily occaſion miſery, as fire or pointed ſubſtances excite pain when they act too forcibly upon the nerves."

I hardly think that the greateſt ſceptic will deny theſe diſtinctions, founded upon facts as certain as the impreſſion of any material ſubſtance upon our ſenſes. If we, now, proceed a little farther, we ſhall find that the diſpoſitions which produce theſe diffe-

different kinds of conduct, are by the moraliſts expreſſed by different names, and enforced by different motives, according to their ſeveral ſyſtems; while natural religion adds its ſanctions, and inclines us to believe that the Deity himſelf, who has diſplayed ſo great an attention to the happineſs and preſervation of his creatures here, may extend his benevolence to another ſtage of exiſtence, and compenſate the evils ſometimes unmeritedly ſuffered below. But if we admit the evidence of revealed religion, the ſcheme of human things is perfect as it is auguſt; the clouds which overſhadowed our horizon are diſſipated, and the gradual progreſs of triumphant virtue, through dangers and difficulties, to eternal happineſs, is diſplayed and aſcertained.

Having laid down theſe principles, it is eaſy to apply them to the particular caſe in queſtion. Slavery is the abſolute dependence

of one man upon another; and is, therefore, as inconſiſtent with all ideas of juſtice as deſpotiſm is with the rights of nature. It is a crime ſo monſtrous againſt the human ſpecies, that all thoſe who practiſe it deſerve to be extirpated from the earth. It is no little, indirect attack upon the ſafety and happineſs of our fellow-creatures, but one that boldly ſtrikes at the foundations of all humanity and juſtice. Robbers invade the property, and murderers the life of human beings: but he that holds another man in bondage, ſubjects the whole ſum of his exiſtence to oppreſſion, bereaves him of every hope, and is, therefore, more deteſtable than robber and aſſaſſin combined. But if no one who has common feeling will commit the outrage, no one who has common ſenſe will attempt to juſtify it by argument; ſince it would involve him in the groſſeſt and moſt inextricable contradictions. He muſt allow that every man has by nature a right to life, yet

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that every other man has a right to rob him of it; that every man has an equal right to ſubſiſtence, yet that every other may deprive him of all the means; and that while every individual is juſtified by nature and the Deity in purſuing his own happineſs by all innocent methods, every other individual is equally juſtified in making him miſerable. In ſhort, it is reducing every thing to the ſtate before deſcribed, a ſtate of conteſt and deſolation, from which right and juſtice are equally excluded.

Of you, Sir, who ſay that you have ſeveral ſlaves, I beg leave to aſk what are the rights you claim over them? Have you a right to torture them when they are guilty of no faults? Have you a right to kill them for your diverſion? Is your power circumſcribed by no bounds, and are there particular beings who bring into the world all the rights which you yourſelf can pre-

tend to, but have ſo entirely loſt them by being tranſported into another country, as to be beyond the protection both of nature and of nature's God?

Surely, Sir, unleſs I am deceived in you, you are a man both of honour and humanity. You ſtart at the idea of wanton and unprovoked barbarity. You would not murther a ſlave to ſhew your dexterity, nor maim him to prove your ſtrength; you would not daſh an infant upon the ground to feed your dogs, even though he was black; nor would you rip up the belly of his mother while ſhe was ſuckling him, to improve your ſkill in anatomy. You neither would, nor *dare* you commit actions like theſe; you feel that you have no right to do them; or, if you have, that every other man has an equal and ſuperior right to deſtroy you like a beaſt of prey. What then are your rights? I anticipate your anſwer: You will feed and

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cloath your Negroes; you will treat them with humanity and tenderneſs, and then you have a right to moderate advantage from their labours. All this, Sir, is well; and could I conceive you ever had acted in another manner, I ſhould never have troubled you with this tedious letter. While your Negroes chooſe to ſtay with you upon theſe terms, this is a fair and equitable compact. But what if they ſhould chooſe to leave you, will you let them go? If you do, you are a man of honour, ſenſe, and humanity; but I fear no Weſt-Indian.

Are there no whips, no gibbets, no puniſhments more dreadful than death itſelf for contumacious ſlaves? And what is this, but claiming the deteſtable power I have mentioned above, that of making other beings miſerable, for your intereſt or amuſement? Who, Sir, gave you a title to their labours, or a right to confine them to loathſome drud-

drudgery? And, if you have a right to this, what are the puniſhments you pretend to inflict but ſo many additional outrages? Has a robber a claim upon your life becauſe you withhold your property; or a raviſher a right to a woman's blood becauſe ſhe defends her chaſtity? Either, then, prove your right to their labours, or acknowledge that the puniſhments inflicted upon fugitive ſlaves are a flagitious inſult upon juſtice, humanity, and common ſenſe.

Permit me, here, to examine for a moment the nature of the title by which you claim an irredeemable property in the labours of your fellow-creatures.—A wretch, devoid of compaſſion and underſtanding, who calls himſelf a King of ſome part of Africa, which ſuffers the calamity of being frequented by the Europeans, ſeizes his innocent ſubjects, or engages in an unneceſſary war to furniſh himſelf with priſoners; theſe

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are loaded with chains, torn from all their comforts and connections, and driven (like beaſts to the ſlaughter-houſe) down to the ſea-ſhore, where the mild ſubjects of a Chriſtian government and a religious king are waiting to agree for the purchaſe, and to tranſport them to America. They are then thruſt by hundreds into the infectious hold of a ſhip, in which the greater part frequently periſhes by diſeaſe, while the reſt are reſerved to experience the candour and humanity of American patriots.—If you have never yet conſidered it, pauſe here for a moment, and endeavour to impreſs upon your mind the feelings of a being full as ſenſible, and, perhaps, more innocent, than you or I, which is thus torn in an inſtant from every thing that makes life agreeable; from country, friends, and parents; from the intercourſe of mutual affection with miſtreſs, lover, or child; which, poſſeſſed of feelings more exquiſite than European hearts can conceive,

is ſeparated for ever from all it loves; that, reduced to a depth of miſery, which, even in the midſt of freedom and affluence, would be ſufficient to overwhelm the moſt hardened diſpoſition, inſtead of friends and comforters, and obſequious attendants, ſees itſelf ſurrounded with unrelenting perſecutors and unpitying enemies; wretches who, by long intercourſe with miſery, are grown callous to its agonies; who anſwer tears with taunts, and complaints with torture!—I ſhudder at the horrors which I deſcribe, and bluſh to be a human creature! Yet theſe are not the colours of deſcription, but a recital of facts leſs ſtrong than the reality. Can any man reflect upon theſe things, without unutterable remorſe? Can he know that, perhaps, while he is wallowing in luxury and ſenſuality, there are beings whoſe exiſtence he has embittered, mothers ſhrieking for their children, and children periſhing for want of their mothers care; wretches who are fran-

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tic with rage, and ſhame, and deſperation, or pining in all the agonies of ſlow and painful death, who might have been at peace if he had never exiſted? Can any man know this, and hope for mercy, either from his fellow-creatures, or his God?—After the arrival of the ſurviving wretches in America, you well know in what manner they are transferred to their conſcientious maſters;—how they are brought to the market, naked, weeping, and in chains;—how one man dares to examine his fellow-creatures as he would do beaſts, and bargain for their perſons;—how all the moſt ſacred duties, affections, and feelings of the human heart, are violated and inſulted; and thus you dare to call yourſelves the maſters of wretches whom you have acquired by fraud, and retain by violence!—While I am tracing this picture, which you and every man, who has been in the iſlands or the ſouthern colonies of America, knows to be true, my aſtoniſh-

ment exceeds even my horror, to find it poſſible that any one ſhould ſeriouſly doubt, whether an equitable title to hold human beings in bondage can be thus acquired?

With what face, Sir, can he who has never reſpected the rights of nature in another, pretend to claim them in his own favour? How dare the inhabitants of the ſouthern colonies ſpeak of privileges and juſtice? Is money of ſo much more importance than life? Or have the Americans ſhared the diſpenſing power of St. Peter's ſucceſſors, to excuſe their own obſervance of thoſe rules which they impoſe on others? If there be an object truly ridiculous in nature, it is an American patriot, ſigning reſolutions of independency with the one hand, and with the other brandiſhing a whip over his affrighted ſlaves.

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If men would be conſiſtent, they muſt admit all the conſequences of their own principles; and you and your countrymen are reduced to the dilemma of either acknowledging the rights of your Negroes, or of ſurrendering your own.—If there be certain natural and univerſal rights, as the declarations of your Congreſs ſo repeatedly affirm, I wonder how the unfortunate Africans have incurred their forfeiture.—Is it the antiquity, or the virtues, or the great qualities of the Engliſh Americans, which conſtitute the difference, and entitle them to rights from which they totally exclude more than a fourth part of the ſpecies?—Or do you chooſe to make uſe of that argument, which the great Monteſquieu has thrown out as the ſevereſt ridicule, that they are black, and you white; that you have lank, long hair, while their's is ſhort and woolly?

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The more attentively you conſider this ſubject, the more clearly you will perceive, that every plea, which can be advanced upon it, is the plea of intereſt and tyranny combating humanity and truth. You cannot hide from yourſelf, that every title you can alledge muſt be a title founded upon fraud or violence, and ſupported by open and avowed injuſtice. Can any thing be clearer, than that a man, who is born free, can never forfeit his inheritance by ſuffering oppreſſion; and that it is a contradiction to urge a purchaſe of what no one has a right to ſell? Nor does it make any difference, whether the unfortunate victim paſs from one to another, or from one to a thouſand maſters, any more than whether a nation be enſlaved by a firſt, or by a hundredth tyrant. There can be no preſcription pleaded againſt truth and juſtice; and the continuance of the evil is ſo far from juſtifying, that it is an exaggeration of the crime. What would you

ſay to a man, in private life, who ſhould pretend to be no thief, becauſe he only bought ſtolen goods; or that he was no villain, becauſe he did not forge a deed himſelf, but only paid another to do it, and enjoyed the eſtate by that honourable ſecurity? Yet this is literally the title which the Americans plead to the unfortunate inhabitants of Africa. You do not go to Africa to buy or ſteal your Negroes; perhaps, becauſe you are too lazy and luxurious: but you encourage an infamous, pitileſs race of men to do it for you, and conſcientiouſly receive the fruits of their crimes. You do not, merciful men, reduce your fellow-creatures to ſervitude! No, men of your independent ſpirits, that have taken up arms againſt the government that had protected and eſtabliſhed them, rather than pay a tax of threepence; that have laid the axe to the root of all human authority, and, inſtead of drinking the bitter waters of civil abuſes and preſcriptive

ſcriptive obedience, have aſcended to the living fountains of truth, juſtice, and nature, would never make flagitious attempts upon the liberties and happineſs of their brethren! Yes, gentlemen, men of liberal minds like your's, acknowledge all mankind to be their equals. Leave hereditary tyrants and their flatterers to make diſtinctions unknown to nature, and to degrade one part of the ſpecies to brutes, while they equal the other with gods!—You know that this is the greateſt of all corruptions; and as ſuch you deteſt it. —What! are not all men naturally equal? And are not all civil diſtinctions, when legitimate, the permiſſion of the people, and conſequently ſubordinate to their power and controul? Did you not carry the rights of men into the uncultivated deſart and the howling wilderneſs? Not of Frenchmen, nor of Germans, nor of Engliſhmen, but of men;—men, the firſt and ſupreme diſtinction, who, created for freedom and happineſs,

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tranſport to every ſoil the inherent prerogatives of their nature.

" Rome n'eſt plus dans Rome, elle eſt par tout ou je ſuis."

Yes, gentlemen, as you are no longer Engliſh, I hope you will pleaſe to be men; and, as ſuch, admit the whole human ſpecies to a participation of your unalienable rights. You will not, therefore, drag a trembling wretch from his cottage and his family; you will not tear the child from the arms of his frantic mother, that they may drag on a loathſome exiſtence in miſery and chains; you will not make depredations upon your unoffending neighbours, and, after having ſpread deſolation over a fertile country, reduce the innocent inhabitants to ſervitude. To do this, you muſt be monſters, worſe, I fear, than the majority of the Houſe of Com-

mons and the Engliſh Miniſtry.* But you are men tremblingly alive to all the rights and feelings of the kind, and I believe ſome of you at leaſt are Chriſtians. Your worſt actions, therefore, the greateſt crimes which even your enemies can object, are only that you are the voluntary cauſes of all theſe miſchiefs!—You, you encourage the Engliſh pirate to violate the laws of faith and hoſpitality, and ſtimulate him to new exceſſes by purchaſing the fruits of his rapine. Your avarice is the torch of treachery and civil war, which deſolates the ſhores of Africa, and ſhakes deſtruction on half the majeſtic ſpecies of man! . . . . . .

* Should this doubt appear abſurd, the reader is deſired to remember it was written the year 1776.

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